

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 2319

DEPT PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR YOUNG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV ZA RH
SUBJ: ZAMBIAN INTERNAL POLITICS AND THE RHODESIAN NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 182691

SUMMARY: IN SPITE OF PRES KAUNDA'S WEAKENED POLITICAL POSITION,
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ON THE ROLE ZAMBIA MAY PLAY IN THE RHODESIAN NEGOTIATIONS
PROCESS IN THE SHORT TERM (SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS). UNTIL THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN INITIATIVE SHOWS PROMISE OF REMOVING SMITH FROM
THE RHODESIAN SCENE WITHIN A CLEARLY DEFINED TIME FRAME, ZAMBIA'S
SUPPORT FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL REMAIN LUKEWARM AND ITS
COMMITMENT TO THE ARMED STRUGGLE WILL GROW. HOWEVER, SHOULD SMITH
LEAVE THE SCENE AND A BLACK GOVERNMENT ASSUME POWER, KAUNDA'S
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INTERNAL WEAKNESS WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO MAINTAIN A
BASE OF MILITARY OPPOSITION TO THAT GOVERNMENT EVEN IF HE
DISAPPROVED OF IT. THIS DISAPPROVAL WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY THE
POSITION OF HIS FELLOW FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS AND BY THE DEGREE OF
LEGITMACY BY WHICH THE BLACK GOVERNMENT ACHIEVED POWER. KAUNDA
WOULD OPPOSE ANY GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS NOT CHOSEN THROUGH AN
IMPARTIALLY ADMINISTERED ELECTION BASED ON UNIVERSAL ADULT

SUFFRAGE BUT HE MIGHT LEAVE TO OTHERS ACTIVE SUPPORT OF MILITARY OPPOSITION TO SUCH A GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMAGE OF A WEAKENED KAUNDA BESET BY PROBLEMS BEYOND HIS CONTROL. HIS DISMISSAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, AND THE REASSIGNMENT OF THE CHIEF OF ZAMBIA'S ARMED FORCES, PLUS REASSIGNING OR DISMISSING OTHER LESSER MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATES. JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AMONG REGIONAL POLITICAL FIGURES IN PREPARATION OF THE 1978 ELECTIONS HAS PROVIDED A STIMULUS TO CRITICISM OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND OF PRESIDENT KAUNDA. DISENCHANTMENT WITH HOW THE KAUNDA GOVERNMENT IS MANAGING THE NATION'S ECONOMY AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD. THE GOVERNMENT IS BEING BLAMED FOR CONSTANT CONSUMER SHORTAGES AFFECTING THE NATION AND FOR ITS FAILURE TO CARRY OUT PROMISED DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES. THE PRIVATE SECTOR AFRICAN ELITE AND POLITICAL FIGURES IN PARLIAMENT ARE DISGRUNTLED OVER WHAT IS SEEN AS THE SACRIFICE OF THE NATION'S WELL BEING ON THE ALTAR OF LIBERATING SOUTHERN AFRICA. THERE HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY SHARP QUESTIONING OF ZAMBIA'S COMMITMENT TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT TO THE EXCLUSION OF OTHER ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST GROUPS. ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL VOTER DISENCHANTMENT HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE HIGH PARTY OFFICIALS NOW CONSIDER IT MIGHT BE WISE TO POSTPONE THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE OSTENSIBLE REASON FOR SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE THAT A NATION

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"AT WAR" CANNOT AFFORD THE LUXURY OF ELECTIONS.

2. THEORETICALLY, POLITICAL PROBLEMS BESETTING KAUNDA SHOULD MAKE HIM MORE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING A NEGOTIATED RHODESIA SETTLEMENT. WE BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE TRUE, HOWEVER, ONLY IF THE NEGOTIATION ROUTE GAVE CLEAR PROMISE OF OUSTING SMITH IN FAVOR OF MAJORITY RULE WITHIN A CLEARLY DEFINED TIME FRAME. MAJORITY RULE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE DEFINED BY KAUNDA IN TERMS OF A PROMINENT ROLE FOR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. IF A NEGOTIATING PACKAGE LACKED CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO MAJORITY RULE WITHIN A TIME FRAME ACCEPTABLE TO HIM, WE BELIEVE KAUNDA'S SUPPORT WOULD BE LUKEWARM AT BEST. KAUNDA IS PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA. HE PROBABLY WOULD CALCULATE THAT HE COULD MASTER ANY INTERNAL POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO HIS SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED STRUGGLE IF HE GAVE LIP SERVICE AT THE SAME TIME TO NEGOTIATIONS. HIS CALCULATIONS MOST LIKELY WOULD BE CORRECT, ESPECIALLY IF HE DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE 1978 ELECTIONS. HIS JUSTIFICATION FOR POSTPONEMENT WOULD BE THE ARMED STRUGGLE ITSELF, WHICH TRANSFORMS ZAMBIA INTO A "NATION AT WAR".

3. WHILE INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE KAUNDA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRESENT ANGLO-AMERICAN

INITIATIVE (UNLESS IT CLEARLY SHOWS PROMISE), THEY WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON ZAMBIAN POLICY TOWARDS A ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT INSTALLED THROUGH AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. THERE ARE ZAMBIANS AT ALL LEVELS CRITICAL OF ZAMBIA'S COMMITMENT TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, WHICH THEY DEFINE AS SUPPORT FOR ZAPU AND NKOMO. THERE ARE ALSO MANY ZAMBIANS WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH FOR MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA. SHOULD SMITH RETIRE FROM THE SCENE AND BE SUCCEEDED BY A BLACK NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE NKOMO AND ZAPU, KAUNDA WOULD BE FACED WITH A DIFFICULT SITUATION. HE WOULD BE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY TWO FACTORS: HIS FELLOW FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS AND THE MEANS BY WHICH A TRANSFER OCCURRED. A DIRECT TURNOVER BY SMITH TO A BLACK LEADER WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO KAUNDA OR HIS FELLOW FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS. THE AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO LEGITIMIZE ITSELF IN SOME WAY. CONFIDENTIAL

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KAUNDA'S DOMESTIC WEAKNESS WILL MAKE HIM MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE BY HIS FRONTLINE COLLEAGUES. IT WILL ALSO, HOWEVER, MAKE HIM LESS WILLING TO CHALLENGE A BLACK GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE WHICH CAN MOUNT ANY CLAIM TO LEGITIMACY. WE BELIEVE, ON BALANCE, THAT KAUNDA'S SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ACTION AGAINST A BLACK RULED ZIMBABWE WOULD BE WEAKENED BY INTERNAL POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND THAT HE WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO LEAVE PRIMARY SUPPORT FOR THE FIGHTING TO OTHER FRONTLINE STATES. LOW

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED AMBASSADOR YOUNG.

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